

Salem library starts offering recreation for seniors

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Irene Jarvis of Salem, right, laughs after nearly rolling a gutter ball during Wii bowling at the Salem Free Public Library last week. The library is hosting programs for senior citizens on Tuesdays.

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Salem — Seniors in this town never had a place to gather or programming to keep them entertained - until now.

The Recreation Commission has started a free social gathering for seniors from noon to 4 p.m. Tuesdays at the Salem Free Public Library. The commission purchased a Wii gaming system so people can bowl or play tennis; seniors also may read books or play cards or board games. The group is working on developing other programs, such as computer lessons.

This is the first programming of its kind for the town's seniors. About 40 seniors who are part of the Salem Seniors Club meet once a month from March to December to socialize and plan day trips and other events.

Jean Schreiner, 71, helps organize the day trips for the Salem Seniors Club. She was optimistic about the new programming.

"We don't have a Salem Senior Center and there's hardly any activity with the Salem Seniors Club," Schreiner said. "I think it's going to work very well. It's a time where all the seniors can get out in the afternoon."

Schreiner usually goes to the Montville and Lebanon senior centers for their senior services. On Tuesday, Schreiner was at the Salem Free Public Library with her friend, June Wescott. It was Wescott's first time playing the Wii bowling.

"It was really fun and the people are great. I never knew what a Wii was," Wescott said. "I can't believe how much fun it was. I hit over 100."

Michael Gallagher, 65, was also at the library playing Wii bowling and card games. He went with his wife, Patricia.

"I enjoyed the gathering. It's a nice option for us to go out in the afternoon and mingle," Gallagher said. "It's a chance to get together to talk about what's going on in the community and meet new people."

Sue Spang, municipal agent for the elderly and chairman of the Recreation Commission, said nearly 300 seniors were notified by postcards about the Tuesday programming.

Although they haven't gotten nearly that many people attending, she said it's becoming more popular.

This Tuesday marked the program's second week.

First Selectman Kevin Lyden commended the Recreation Department and commission for instituting the programming.

He said it's a good utilization of the town buildings.

"Anytime we can better utilize the building, I'd like to see that. It's a win-win for the library, the Recreation Department and our town," Lyden said.

Some seniors said they'd like to have a senior center in town so that more programs could be offered, especially during the evenings.

Spang said the difficulty with getting a full senior services program together is lack of funding and personnel.

Lyden said he wants to build on the new programming now offered.